

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

ASU51
Copy 2

58



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of
Public Affairs

Selected Speeches and News Releases

January 30 - February 5, 1992

IN THIS ISSUE:

News Releases—

Female Moths Know When to Say "Yes"

USDA Establishes U.S. Standards for Canola

Hotline Established to Coordinate Private Donations to Former Soviet Union

USDA to Fund 35 Water Quality Projects

Mississippi Changes Status, Progresses Toward Brucellosis Eradication

USDA Issues Six Permits to Field Test Genetically Engineered Plants

CCC Interest Rate for February Lowered to 4-1/8 Percent

USDA Library Provides Eastern Europeans With Information Resources

USDA Announces 1992-Crop Burley Tobacco Program; Sets Referendum

USDA Approves 27 New Resource Conservation and Development Areas

USDA Announces Deficiency Payments for 1991-Crop Rice

USDA Announces Final Deficiency Payments for 1991-Crop Upland Cotton

Livestock "Johnny Appleseeds" Reseed Ranges

U.S. to Donate Agricultural Commodities to Russia

News Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

FEMALE MOTHS KNOW WHEN TO SAY “YES”

WASHINGTON, Jan. 31—A destructive crop pest practices family planning to ensure that it will return each growing season to worm its way into hundreds of millions of dollars worth of U.S. corn, cotton, soybeans and tomatoes, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists will report in tomorrow’s issue of the journal, *Science*.

The moth moms of the corn earworm—also known as the cotton bollworm or tomato fruitworm—delay sex until the crops have produced the plant parts their offspring will thrive on, said entomologist Ashok K. Raina of the USDA’s Agricultural Research Service.

They do this by withholding their seductive pheromone, which males of the same species home in on to locate a ready and willing mate. So mating is timed to the pest’s preference for eating corn silks and kernels or tomatoes and cotton bolls instead of the less desirable plant leaves, he said.

Raina and colleagues Timothy G. Kingan and Autar K. Mattoo reported that ethylene and other gaseous chemicals emitted by corn silks trigger production of the sex pheromone in the female moth *Helicoverpa zea*. Ethylene is the plant hormone that initiates fruit ripening.

An intact tomato has the same effect. It also exists as a host because it produces the chemical signals that the female moth recognizes, according to the researchers. “As soon as the female moth is mated, she has no control over egg laying and lays them on anything available,” said Raina. “In order to have a suitable host plant for her offspring, she has to time her mating to the release of ethylene and other volatile compounds that identify the right plant in the right stage of development.”

“During evolution,” he noted, “the insect has developed the ability to associate ethylene with a host plant’s maturity.”

The researchers found that several other chemicals released from corn silk prompt the female moths to gear up production of their sex pheromone.

They also demonstrated that the plant volatiles are “recognized” by receptor molecules in the female moths’ antennae—the insect equivalent

of a nose. This sets off a chain of events that results in release of the pheromone, Raina explained.

The finding, said Mattoo, opens up a whole new approach for controlling this and possibly other insect pests. "Once we understand how the chemical recognition system works, it will be easy to develop a chemical analog to block receptors in the antennae."

The analog could be sprayed on crops to prevent females from releasing their sex pheromone, which should prevent mating, he said.

Since the offspring actually feed on 70 or more different plants, Raina said, "we suspect that at least some of the volatile compounds in corn silk are either common to all of the pest's plant hosts or that the moths are able to respond to a variety of compounds from different hosts."

Whatever the reason, the sex timing has served the pests well. Just about everyone who has shucked corn has been greeted by a light green or brown, inch-long "worm" that turned the tip of the ear to mush.

The corn earworm seems to prefer sweet corn to field corn, so there are no national statistics on the damage it leaves in its wake. But under one of its aliases—the cotton bollworm—it and a cousin, the cotton budworm, munched their way through more than \$200 million worth of U.S. cotton annually in the mid 1980's, according to USDA estimates.

It's also an important pest of soybeans, Raina said. And under another alias—the tomato fruitworm—it has a yen for garden tomatoes and a variety of other vegetables.

Judy McBride (301) 504-8932

#

USDA ESTABLISHES U.S. STANDARDS FOR CANOLA

WASHINGTON, Jan. 31—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Grain Inspection Service has established U.S. standards for canola under authority of the U.S. Grain Standards Act.

The standards require official inspection and weighing of canola shipped outside the United States, except under certain conditions. For domestic shipments, official inspection and weighing is available, but not required.

FGIS Administrator John C. Foltz said the new standards will facilitate marketing of canola and provide uniform federal procedures for its inspection and grading.

The standards will become effective Feb. 28.

Dana Stewart (202) 720-5091

#

HOTLINE ESTABLISHED TO COORDINATE PRIVATE DONATIONS TO FORMER SOVIET UNION

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30—The United States has established a 24-hour Emergency Donation Hotline to assist the donation or sales of needed commodities or services to the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, Acting Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman said today.

The jointly sponsored U.S. Department of Agriculture/U.S. Agency for International Development hotline will assist individuals, corporations and private organizations with donation and sales questions. Experts in emergency relief donations and distribution will staff the hotline.

Callers will receive the latest information on relief activities in the newly independent states, as well as a list of private agencies involved in relief operations. Information on making donations, including commodities and services most in need in the recipient countries, also will be provided.

“All donations are welcome,” Veneman said. “But to respond as fast as possible to the wide variety of needs in these countries, cash is the preferred method of donation. Cash contributions will allow for quick purchase and distribution of the most needed items by private voluntary agencies.”

Veneman said private contributions of bulk food and medical supplies, cash, technical services and other items will supplement the package of U.S. aid already announced for the former republics of the Soviet Union, which includes \$165 million in food assistance.

Agreements are now being formulated with private voluntary organizations to begin distribution of this aid in the newly independent states, she said.

The Emergency Donation Hotline number is (703) 276-1914, is staffed by live operators from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time Monday through Friday. Taped messages may be left during other hours.

Sally Klusaritz (202) 720-3448

#

USDA TO FUND 35 WATER QUALITY PROJECTS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 31—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced it will provide \$9.1 million for 35 Agricultural Conservation Program special water quality projects in 27 states.

John Stevenson, associate administrator of USDA’s Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, said USDA will provide cost-share assistance for remedial actions to improve water quality, solve problems caused by agricultural non-point source pollution of ground and surface water, and to support individual state efforts. Such pollution stems from animal waste, fertilizers, pesticides and sediment.

“On all of these projects we will be working closely with state and local agencies, the U.S. Geological Survey and the Environmental Protection Agency,” Stevenson said.

ASCS state and county offices will administer the projects with help from USDA’s Cooperative Extension Service and the Soil Conservation Service.

The projects will be monitored by USDA, USGS, EPA and state agencies to ensure that the public’s water supply is protected and improved.

The projects by state are:

State	Project	Funds Approved (dollars)
Alabama	Locust Fork	400,000
Arkansas	Moark White River Initiative	
	Pilot	300,000
California	Livestock Waste Control	150,000
Connecticut	Little River and Muddy Brook	200,000
Delaware	Chesapeake Bay	250,000
	Nanticoke River	200,000

Georgia	Upper Hiwassee Headwaters	300,000
	Upper Chatahoochee River	
	Basin and Tributaries	500,000
Illinois	Bonpas	500,000
	Upper Shoal Creek	200,000
Iowa	Swan Lake	90,000
Kansas	Walnut Creek	360,000
	White Rock Creek	300,000
Kentucky	Fleming County	200,000
	Mammoth Cave Karst Area	500,000
Louisiana	Acadia Parish Mementau Basin	200,000
Maine	Presumpscot River	200,000
Maryland	Upper Pocomoke River	160,000
Massachusetts	Berkshire County	79,000
Michigan	Lichte Creek	33,000
	Van Ettan Creek	128,000
Mississippi	Pearl River Basin-	
	Bogue Chitto River	400,000
Missouri	White River Pilot	300,000
Montana	Cherry Creek	200,000
Nebraska	Bazile Triangle	200,000
	Quad County	500,000
New Jersey	Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer	
	System	300,000
New York	Lake Champlain Empire Basin	500,000
North Dakota	Renwick, Homme, Mt. Carmel	100,000
Oregon	Prairie Creek	225,000
Puerto Rico	Patillas	125,000
South Carolina	Fork Creek-Hill Creek	200,000
Vermont	Lower Lake Champlain	300,000
	Lower Lamoille	400,000
West Virginia	Upper Mill Creek	100,000
Total	9,100,000	

Robert Feist (202) 720-6789

#

MISSISSIPPI CHANGES STATUS, PROGRESSES TOWARD BRUCELLOSIS ERADICATION

WASHINGTON, Jan. 31—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today advanced Mississippi from Class B to Class A brucellosis status in recognition of the state's progress toward eradication of this costly cattle disease.

“Mississippi should be commended for its efforts to eradicate brucellosis,” said Deputy Administrator for Veterinary Services Lonnie J. King of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. “The cooperative state-federal program is making tremendous strides, and we look forward to the day when Mississippi will be free of cattle brucellosis.”

Brucellosis, sometimes called Bang's disease, is an infectious, contagious bacterial disease that causes abortion, impaired fertility and reduced milk production in cattle. Brucellosis can also infect other farm animals, such as swine. Humans can be infected by drinking unpasteurized milk from infected animals or by handling aborted fetuses from brucellosis-infected animals.

The advancement from Class B to Class A allows Mississippi cattle owners to move cattle interstate without quarantine and retesting in the state of destination. At present, only three states (Texas, Louisiana and Florida) remain in Class B. Mississippi joins 17 states in Class A status. Twenty-nine states are designated free of cattle brucellosis.

The cooperative program uses the classification system to indicate each state's progress in eliminating brucellosis. States reach disease-free status when no cattle are found to be infected for 12 consecutive months. States with Class A status have a herd infection rate of no more than .25 percent. States having a herd infection rate between .25 and 1.5 percent are in Class B. There are no states remaining in Class C.

An interim rule designating Mississippi as a Class A state was effective Jan. 27 and will be published in today's Federal Register.

Comments will be accepted if they are received on or before March 31. An original and three copies of written comments referring to Docket 92-005 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, USDA, Room 866 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782. Comments may be inspected at USDA, Room

1141-S, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Alan Zagier (301) 436-7255

#

USDA ISSUES SIX PERMITS TO FIELD TEST GENETICALLY ENGINEERED PLANTS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 31—In November and December, the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued six permits to commercial companies to field-test crop plants that were genetically engineered.

“USDA has been issuing permits since 1987 for controlled field trials of certain genetically engineered crops,” said Terry L. Medley, director of biotechnology, biologics, and environmental protection for USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

The six permits were issued as follows:

—CIBA-GEIGY Corporation, Research Triangle Park, N.C., received permission to conduct a second year of trials with insect-resistant tobacco plants in Franklin County, N.C. The test plants contain genes from two subspecies of the beneficial soil bacterium, *Bacillus thuringiensis*. These genes enable the tobacco plants to produce a toxin against several damaging insect pests.

—Frito-Lay, Inc., Rhinelander, Wis., received permission to conduct a second year of trials with genetically engineered potato plants in Oneida County, Wis. The potato plants were modified to produce more of a metabolic enzyme that counteracts sweetening of potato tubers resulting from exposure to cold. Sweetening is undesirable because it results in a taste most people don’t like and produces an unsightly browning.

—Petoseed Research Center, Woodland, Calif., received permission to conduct a field test with genetically engineered tomato plants in Hendry County, Fla. The tomato plants were modified to retard ripening of the fruit, thereby extending its shelf life. The company is testing three different engineered genes that counteract enzymes responsible for ripening.

—Calgene, Inc., Davis, Calif., received permission to conduct a similar field test with tomato plants in Riverside County, Calif. Calgene is working with a single anti-ripening gene.

—Cargill Hybrid Seeds, Aurora, Ill., received permission to conduct a

field test with genetically engineered corn in Kane County, Ill. The corn plants were modified to tolerate use of the phosphinothricin class of herbicides.

—The University of California at Davis received permission to conduct a field test with genetically modified apple trees in Stanislaus County, Calif. The test saplings contain a gene derived from the beneficial soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* which helps plants generate a toxin against several damaging insect pests. The university's permit extends to March 1994, when the apple saplings will be partially mature. As a safeguard against unwanted spread of the engineered trait, university researchers will not permit the saplings to flower.

Genetic engineering uses laboratory techniques to transfer genetic material between living organisms to give them added inherited traits beneficial to agriculture. Most experiments with plants that are genetically engineered need APHIS permits for field tests. In addition, researchers need permits to import or ship certain plants and organisms—but not for conducting laboratory or greenhouse tests.

Permits for field trials are granted only after a multidisciplinary team of APHIS scientists determines that there is no risk of introducing or disseminating a plant pest and no significant impact on the environment. Permits generally are issued for a single growing season, but they can be renewed.

APHIS scientists focus on the biology, propagation and cultivation of the plant species being altered. They review the source species of the engineered genes, the vector and vector agents used to transfer the genes and the stability of the insertion.

Reviewers also look into the origin and safety of marker genes used in many experiments to help differentiate engineered plants from standard plants. The reviewers cover the design and management of the field plot and the disposition of the test plants. They also check potential impact on endangered and threatened plants and animals.

Copies of environmental assessments for all field tests are available from Mary Petrie, USDA, APHIS, BBEP, 847 Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Amichai Heppner (301) 436-5222

#

CCC INTEREST RATE FOR FEBRUARY LOWERED TO 4-1/8 PERCENT

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3—Commodity loans disbursed in February by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation will carry a 4-1/8 percent interest rate, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the CCC.

The 4-1/8 percent rate is down from January's 4-1/2 percent and reflects the interest rate charged CCC by the U.S. Treasury in February.

Robert Feist (202) 720-6789

#

USDA LIBRARY PROVIDES EASTERN EUROPEANS WITH INFORMATION RESOURCES

WASHINGTON—Improved relations between the United States and Eastern Europe have brought a flood of international visitors to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Md.

“They're not tourists, they're agricultural librarians looking to NAL for advice in protecting their agricultural information, said Joe Howard, NAL director. “And they want to return the favor by sharing their information with the United States.”

One such recent visitor was Helena Slezakova, a librarian at the Institute of Scientific and Technical Information for Agriculture in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Slezakova came to NAL because her country's agricultural knowledge is in jeopardy.

“We too have a very precious collection of old agricultural publications,” Slezakova said, “but unfortunately we don't have the facilities to maintain them the way you do. One of our big problems is the environment. Conditions are much more severe in Czechoslovakia. Air pollution is especially damaging to our publications.”

Howard said Czechoslovakia is not the only country concerned with losing its agricultural heritage.

“It is a worldwide problem. Even here at NAL we are quite concerned with staying ahead of the dramatic deterioration of the nation's collection of agricultural information,” Howard said.

Slezakova spent two weeks at NAL learning how the library develops

and applies new information management technology to meet this problem. She was impressed.

“I saw the optical scanning of text onto compact discs, the preparation of abstracts for AGRICOLA [NAL’s bibliographic database],” she said. “It was interesting because I think it is a very modern technology, and I would like to have something like that at home to improve our methods of work.”

Slezakova hopes to adapt some NAL systems for use at her country’s agricultural institute. She was particularly interested in ISIS, NAL’s computer automated catalog which allows NAL patrons to find the information they need in minutes.

“I would like to be more acquainted with the ISIS system because we are now preparing the automation of our library’s catalogs. ISIS looks like an excellent system for that purpose,” Slezakova said.

Whether technology from NAL can be adapted for use by the Czechoslovakians, Slezakova said only time would tell. She takes great pride in her nation’s agricultural library and wants it to keep abreast of the times.

“Our library is a very great library. We have over one million volumes, making it the third largest in the world. The first as I know is NAL, then the agricultural library in Moscow and then comes our library,” she said. “But one of the big problems is our computers which are old. Sometimes they function and sometimes not.”

Computer problems have frustrated Slezakova and her co-workers in many of their attempts to modernize their library. NAL has offered to share even more of its expertise with the Czechoslovakians as they work to overcome these problems.

To help in building stronger ties between the world’s agricultural libraries, NAL sponsored a conference with eastern European agricultural librarians in Beltsville, Md., early this winter. Representatives from six eastern European countries attended, and participants vowed to continue international cooperation in preserving and exchanging agricultural knowledge.

Countries represented at the conference were Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. Within the last year, NAL also has hosted agricultural librarians from the former Soviet Union, the People’s Republic of China, the Netherlands, Nigeria and other countries.

With the Library of Congress and the National Library of Medicine, NAL is one of three national libraries of the United States.

Brian Norris (301) 504-6778

Issued: Feb. 3, 1992

#

USDA ANNOUNCES 1992-CROP BURLEY TOBACCO PROGRAM; SETS REFERENDUM

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced the following provisions of the 1992 burley tobacco program:

—A crop marketing quota of 670 million pounds, down from the 1991 quota of 726 million pounds. Determination of the quota is based on purchase intentions by domestic manufacturers of 445.5 million pounds; unmanufactured exports (3-year average) of 187.6 million pounds; a reserve stock adjustment of 36.9 million pounds; and a discretionary adjustment of zero pounds.

—A support level of \$1.649 per pound, up 6.5 cents from 1991.

—A basic quota decrease for each farm of about 7.5 percent from 1991.

—An effective quota of about 830 million pounds, 16 million pounds below 1991.

—A marketing assessment of 0.8245 cents per pound on both growers and buyers, for a total of 1.649 cents per pound, under requirements of amendments contained in the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990.

The no-net-cost program assessment will be announced later.

Burley tobacco growers will vote Feb. 24-27 in a mail referendum on whether marketing quotas on a poundage basis will continue for burley tobacco for the next three years. Quotas will remain in effect if less than one-third of the voting producers vote no. Burley tobacco is grown in Kentucky, Tennessee and surrounding states.

In a separate referendum, Virginia burley tobacco growers will vote Feb. 24-27 by mail ballot to determine whether growers favor lease and transfer of burley tobacco poundage quotas across county lines. If more than 50 percent of producers voting in this referendum favor cross-county leasing, then beginning with the 1992 crop, lease and transfer of a burley quota from one farm to any other farm in Virginia will be permitted. If

50 percent or more of the growers disapprove, then lease and transfer of poundage quotas will continue only within counties.

John Carlin Ryan (202) 720-8207

#

USDA APPROVES 27 NEW RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AREAS

RENO, Nev., Feb. 4—Chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service Bill Richards today announced establishment of 27 new Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Areas in 23 states and the Pacific Basin.

Richards said the action qualifies the new areas to receive federal technical and financial assistance for land conservation, water management, community development and other environmental concerns.

Richards made the announcement here at the annual convention of the National Association of Conservation Districts.

"We are pleased to provide assistance for rural development and resource conservation," he said. "We will be working with local leaders to help them expand economic, cultural, and recreational opportunities for residents and to improve the environment."

USDA's Soil Conservation Service manages the Resource Conservation and Development Program, which was established 30 years ago. The newly designated RC&D areas bring the current number of active RC&D areas to 236.

Under the program, local RC&D councils set their own conservation and development goals and identify agencies, groups, and foundations to fund and carry out specific RC&D projects. USDA provides each area with a project coordinator to assist the council in its work.

Council members represent sponsoring organizations, including county governments, soil and water conservation districts, towns, water districts, private conservation organizations and other nonprofit groups.

Through their efforts, councils have improved local water supplies, marketed local products, and improved needed community facilities, including hospitals, schools, and water and sewage treatment plants. They also have accelerated efforts to control erosion, improve recreation facilities, and provide flood protection.

The 27 new areas cover 136,187,407 acres in 205 counties. The table below lists these new areas, the states in which they are located, and the counties each area covers.

	Name of RC&D Area	Counties
ALABAMA	Mid-South	Autauga, Bullock, Butler, Elmore, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, and Montgomery
ARKANSAS	Northwest Arkansas	Baxter, Benton, Boone, Newton, Carroll, Madison, Marion, Newton, Searcy, and Washington
COLORADO	Southeast Colorado	Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero, and Prowers
GEORGIA	Central Savannah River	Burke, Columbia, Glascock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Lincoln, McDuffie, Richmond, Screven, Taliaferro, Warren, and Wilkes
HAWAII	Garden Island	Kauai
IDAHO	Three Rivers	Bannock, Bingham, Power, and the Fort Hall Indian Reservation
ILLINOIS	Prairie Rivers	Bureau, LaSalle, Livingston, Marshall, Putnam, Peoria, and Stark
IOWA	M & M Divide	Audubon, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Guthrie, and Sac
KENTUCKY	Licking River Valley	Bourbon, Bracken, Fleming, Harrison, Mason, Nicholas, Pendleton, and Robertson
KENTUCKY	Kentucky Heritage	Anderson, Boyle, Garrard, Lincoln, Marion, Mercer, Nelson, Shelby, Spencer, and Washington
LOUISIANA	Northeast Delta	Catahoula, Caldwell, Concordia, East Carroll, Franklin, LaSalle, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, and West Carroll

MAINE	Heart of Maine	Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Somerset
MICHIGAN	Saginaw Bay	Arenac, Bay, Clare, Genesee, Gladwin, Gratiot, Huron, Isabella, Lapeer, Livingston, Midland, Saginaw, Sanilac, Shiawassee, and Tuscola
MINNESOTA	Pembina Trail	Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau
MISSISSIPPI	Central Mississippi	Attala, Claiborne, Hinds, Leake, Madison, Neshoba, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Warren, Winston, and Yazoo
MONTANA	Eastern Plains	Carter, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Fallon, Garfield, McCone, Powder River, Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Treasure, Valley, and Wibaux
NEW MEXICO	Sureste	Chaves, Eddy, and Lea
NORTH CAROLINA	Blue Ridge	Alleghany, Ashe, and Watauga
OHIO	Miami Valley	Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Fayette, Greene, Hamilton, Montgomery, Preble, and Warren
OKLAHOMA	Cross Timbers	Creek, Lincoln, McIntosh, Muskogee, Okfuskee, Okmulgee, Pottowatomie, and Seminole
OKLAHOMA	Tall Grass	Osage, Pawnee, Payne, Rogers, Tulsa, and Washington
OKLAHOMA	Wheatland	Alfalfa, Blaine, Canadian, Garfield, Grant, Kay, King- fisher, Logan, Major, and Noble
PACIFIC BASIN	Marianas Island	Guam, Northern Mariana

TEXAS	Piney Woods	Anderson, Angelina, Cherokee, Houston, Nacogdoches, Rusk, Sabine, San Augustine, Shelby, and Trinity
UTAH	Panoramaland	Juab, Millard, Piute, Sanpete, Sevier, and Wayne
VIRGINIA	Tidewater	Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland
WASHINGTON	North-Central Washington	Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan

Ted Kupelian (202) 720-5776
Arthur Whitmore (202) 720-4026

#

USDA ANNOUNCES DEFICIENCY PAYMENTS FOR 1991-CROP RICE

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5—Eligible rice producers will receive about \$435 million in deficiency payments for the 1991 crop of rice, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Commodity Credit Corporation.

Deficiency payments are required when the national average market price received by producers during the first five months (August through December) of the marketing year is below the established target price.

The total payment rate is based on the difference between the target price, \$10.71 per hundredweight, and the higher of the market price or the national average loan rate of \$6.50 per hundredweight.

The market price is \$7.64 per hundredweight, resulting in a total deficiency payment rate of \$3.07 per hundredweight. An advance payment of \$1.504 per hundredweight was made earlier to eligible producers who requested advances, resulting in advance payments of approximately \$215 million.

Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206

#

USDA ANNOUNCES FINAL DEFICIENCY PAYMENTS FOR 1991-CROP UPLAND COTTON

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5—Eligible upland cotton producers will receive approximately \$320 million in final deficiency payments for the 1991 crop of upland cotton, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Bjerke said final payments will be made in cash through county offices of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

Deficiency payments are required when national average market price received by producers during the calendar year, which includes the first five months of the marketing year, is below the established target price.

The payment rate is based on the difference between the target price and the higher of the calendar year national average market price or the base quality loan rate. Since the 1991 calendar year national average market price was above the loan rate, the deficiency payment rate for the 1991 crop is 10.1 cents per pound—the difference between the target price of 72.9 cents per pound and the calendar year national average market price of 62.8 cents per pound.

An advance payment of 4 cents per pound was made earlier to eligible producers requesting an advance. The final payment for producers who received an advance payment will be 6.1 cents per pound.

Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206

#

LIVESTOCK "JOHNNY APPLESEEDS" RESEED RANGES

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5—Cattle, sheep, and goats can take on the role of Johnny Appleseed, spreading seed on western range where farm machinery can't go, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists.

In New Mexico, steers—male beef cattle—were fed gelatin capsules. Within the capsules were seeds of the plants that USDA scientists want to establish on remote and poor quality rangeland.

"Just like the kind of gelatin capsules we swallow, these also dissolve in the stomach. In our case, medicine is released, but in the steers, seeds were released. The seeds were excreted with manure on the land two to

three days later,” said plant geneticist, Jerry R. Barrow with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service.

“Some cattle graze areas so rough and inaccessible that no conventional seeding equipment or technique could be used to improve the land,” said Barrow. “But, cattle can spread seed. These cattle are reminiscent of John Chapman, better known as Johnny Appleseed, who planted apple seeds as he roamed the American frontier of the early 1800’s.”

Seeding rangeland from conventional farm machinery or airplanes is prohibitively expensive for most ranchers, said range scientist Kris M. Havstad, Barrow’s colleague at the Jornada Experimental Range near Las Cruces.

Havstad said costs sometimes exceed the value of the land. And, even after seeding, he added, there’s no guarantee the seed will germinate and become established on land that gets less than 10 inches of rain in a year.

“When cattle deposit seed on the range, it’s in the middle of manure droppings that contain moisture and all the nutrients plants need to start growing,” said Havstad. “It would be hard to create a more ideal growing environment for this seed—50 percent germinates.”

Barrow and Havstad tested four plants native to the Southwest. They found that about half of the seed from fourwing saltbush, alkali sacaton and blue panicgrass passed through the steers’ digestive tracts. Another grass seed, sideoats grama, was completely digested.

“We need to find ways to improve our rangelands for domestic animals and wildlife. This method is one possible approach because it is inexpensive and doesn’t disrupt the environment. The downside is that it will take longer to have an impact compared to mechanical seeding,” said Havstad. Havstad explained, “When you seed mechanically you generally put out eight pounds of seed to an acre, thousands and thousands of seed per pound, and a tremendous amount of seed is dispersed very quickly. However, seeding through cattle disperses less seed and doesn’t distribute seed uniformly across the landscape.”

“Also,” he said, “in many areas, we can’t use mechanical seeding equipment because it might disturb threatened or endangered plants and animals. Other areas must be protected because they are archaeologically important.”

Havstad and Barrow said the seed-carrying capsules were used in the tests to ensure that cattle got seed. Other ways to do this—such as mixing seed in feed—could be used for livestock or wildlife including birds. According to the researchers, the key is to use seed that won't be digested and is adapted to the local area.

Dennis Senft (510) 559-6068

#

U.S. TO DONATE AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES TO RUSSIA

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will donate 6,280 metric tons of U.S. agricultural commodities to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Inc., a private voluntary organization, for distribution to needy citizens of Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia.

The \$9 million donation includes \$7 million in commodities and \$2 million in transportation costs. Commodities include 935 metric tons of U.S. nonfat dry milk; 935 tons each of peas, rice and beans; 1,890 tons of vegetable oil and 650 tons of powdered infant formula. USDA will pay for ocean and inland transportation to distribution sites.

“These commodities will provide much needed food to three population groups most at risk—the infirm, the elderly and children,” said Madigan. “Over 500,000 food packages will be delivered door-to-door to individuals who are home-bound or unable to stand in food lines. In addition, other supplies will be delivered to institutions such as orphanages.”

The nonfat dry milk will be provided under Section 416(b) of the Agricultural Act of 1949. The other commodities will be provided under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food for Progress Program. The supply period for this donation is fiscal 1992.

These donations are part of the administration's previously announced \$165 million package of humanitarian food assistance to former republics of the Soviet Union.

For more information, contact James F. Keefer, Foreign Agricultural Service, (202) 720-5263.

Sally Klusaritz (202) 720-3448

#